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REPORT
ON
JAMES MILLS

October 20, 1926.

JAMES MILLS

Eleanor Reinhart and James Mills were married on December 18, 1905. Mills had always lived in New Brunswick, his mother and several brothers, including Henry Mills, lived there also. Charlotte, who was 16 in 1922, and Dan, who was 9 or 10 at that time, are the only children of Eleanor and James Mills. Eleanor's family were Germans who had lived in New Brunswick for years. She had several sisters and brothers living there. She seems to have been uncontrollable from youth and it is gossip that her marriage to Mills when she was only 16 was forced because of her pregnancy. She was fond of reading modern sex novels, was devoted in music, had fair taste and apparently enjoyed expressing her thoughts in writing. She rebelled against the poverty of the home which Mills provided for her and aspired to "higher things". The church of St. John the Evangelist absorbed her interest. She and Mrs. Minna Clark were the two most faithful voluntary workers at the church. She and her daughter Charlotte were intimates. Mills and Dan were more companionable. Husband and wife appear to have had incompatible temperaments and quarreled continuously. Eleanor was not strong physically and particularly after the operation in January, 1922, when she had a kidney removed, she suffered much from pain at intervals.

In 1922 James Mills was sexton of St. John the Evangelist and also the janitor of the nearby Lord Stirling High School, earning a total of \$125.00 or \$135.00 per month. He was a quiet, unassuming personality, content with his lot in life and scornful of the aspirations of his wife and daughter. Unless goaded beyond endurance, a harmless man, one whom people instinctively looked down on and pitied. He was the least worth while of his mother's children. Years before 1922 Mills had been a shoe cutter by trade, but the factory moved from New Brunswick and Mills then turned to odd jobs. He continued, however, to keep his shoe cutter's knife, a very sharp one, and repaired the family's shoes. This knife was never seen after the murders. (See Charlotte Mills' testimony, preliminary hearing, for hearsay testimony covering conversations between Charlotte and Mrs. Mills concerning Mrs. Hall)

In July 1922 Hall established a church camp near Point Pleasant, at which the following among others were present at one time or another:

Catherine Rastall
Ruth Pennington
Marion Clelland
Mrs. Giple
Lillian Van Dorn
Mrs. Mina Turton
Mrs. Hassel
Mrs. Fulton

(For addresses see DeMartini's report of December 22, 1922.)

Mrs. Mills was also there and Hall stayed at the camp for several days, returning over the weekend to preach on Sunday. Mrs. Hall was in one of the parties of several cars which took the women from New Brunswick to Point Pleasant. It is her recollection that she drove some of the Mills family down herself. She recalls nothing of the conversation. She stayed several hours while tents were being arranged, etc., and then returned to New Brunswick. Mills states that on his wife's return from the camp at Point Pleasant she told him that some boys had attempted to frighten the women in the absence of Mr. Hall; that Mills then asked her, "Why don't Mr. Hall have any protection?" Mrs. Mills then said, "Yes, Mr. Hall had an automatic pistol, 32 caliber, with a handle like an umbrella." The other women at the camp say that they saw no firearms of any kind at the camp and Mills himself says that he never saw Hall handle a revolver, nor did Hall ever tell him that he owned one. (Mills may have told this story in order to indicate that a 32 caliber automatic was in the Hall house. When he told the story to investigators, the papers had stated that the murders had been committed with a 32 caliber automatic.)

Mr. and Mrs. Hall left New Brunswick on July 31st for their vacation, which they spent at Islesford, an island off the coast of Maine. While there Hall wrote Mrs. Mills various letters, postmarked from Seal Harbor, Maine, a postoffice on a nearby island. One of these letters, dated "Sunday afternoon", refers to an incident at Point Pleasant, concerning which Hall says:

"About Mrs. Hall - she hasn't said a word about you & I don't think has changed toward you - but her remarks at Point Pleasant were foolish and entirely uncalled for. I don't blame you for being hurt - you know how I feel about them. Dearest, don't let it trouble you. I didn't show her your letter to me - but you were wise to send it to Islesford - for she might have commented if no letter came from you. But she didn't ask to see it - just said, 'Is there any news from Eleanor?'. As for writing to her - do just as seems best to you - it will be all right either way."

Mrs. Hall has no recollection of any conversations in which she might have wounded the feelings of Mrs. Mills, nor any incident to which the above quotation could relate.

While at Islesford Hall appears to have kept a diary, the first entry in which is dated "Monday, July 31st", and the last entry "Tuesday, August 22nd". The entry of Monday, August 14th, has a concluding paragraph as follows:

"N.B. - Darling - wonderheart - today I sent you a letter that means much to us - I mean the one in which I told you I had gotten a telegram from a private detective I told you about - to the effect that he had proof that settles Ian Smythe definitely - and for all times - he will not try to bother you again."

This is apparently a forged entry. At the time the diary and letters from Hall were sold by the Mills family to the New York American four years ago this entry was generally believed to have been added in order to lead other newspapermen off the track. Investigation has produced nothing to indicate that the entry is genuine. Mrs. Hall read the letters and diary for the first time about three weeks ago. She informs me that the incidents referred to in them occurred and their authorship by Hall seems to be established for that reason.

Apparently Hall and Mrs. Mills had agreed that each of them would keep diaries during his vacation and would exchange them upon his return. Mills states that one day (date uncertain), while he was having a "scuffle" with his wife, he tore a page out of her diary and that she then threw the diary in the fire. At all events Mrs. Mills' diary was never found. Several of the letters from Hall to Mrs. Mills were written after the return of Mr. and Mrs. Hall from Islesford to New Brunswick on August 25th. These letters are undated and are mostly unsigned "D.T.L." - German for "Your true love". There is no reference whatsoever in Hall's letters to Mrs. Mills, or his diary, to James Mills. There is, however, reference to the Parker home, Easton Avenue, rides and walks together. Hall's letters to Mrs. Mills and Hall's diary were found in the Mills' house some time after the murders by Charlotte, presumably, and taken by her to her aunt, Mrs. Elsie Barnhart, at Paterson, N.J. Mrs. Barnhart seems to have been the favorite sister of Mrs. Mills. Subsequently these letters and notes were sold to the New York American. The notes from Mrs. Mills to Hall, undated, unsigned and without salutation, but identified as being in her handwriting, were found between the bodies. They contain frequent references to Mills, showing Mrs. Mills' fear of her husband. (See below for analysis of notes and quotations therefrom.) The exchange of notes and meetings of Hall and Mrs. Mills seem to have been quite frequent during the week or ten days preceding the murders.

As was their custom for two or three years previously, Mr. and Mrs. Hall took Mrs. Minna Clark and Mrs. Mills on a picnic to Lake Hopatcong on Sunday, September 13th. Mrs. Hall, Sr. also went. This was done by the Halls to show their appreciation of the work of Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Mills at the church during the year. Mills states that his wife said nothing to him about Mrs. Hall's attitude toward her on the trip, but Charlotte says that her mother told her that Mrs. Hall had given her a "killing look" that day. Mrs. Mills got home about 9:00 P.M. on the 13th. Mills states that on that evening, which was the night

before the murders, he saw some sheets of paper in the coat of Mrs. Mills hanging on the door; that he glanced at them, saw the words "Honey" and "Dear", saw that they bore no postmark, were undated, without salutation and not signed. He says he did not read the notes! - and that he saw only two or three.

On Thursday morning, September 14th, he was about his work, doing his usual chores, was home for dinner and, after his work at the school, went to the church around five o'clock and stayed there to clean up some shavings left by carpenters who had been working there. Shortly before six o'clock, Hall came to the church. Mills explained to him that some painting had to be done and Hall said he would telephone to Mr. Bartholomew. Hall went into the church for a few minutes, then came out and left about five minutes after six. In response to Ellis Parker's question to Mills, "What conversation did you have with him?", Mills began his answer, "There was nothing wrong". After Hall left, Mills went into the church for a few moments. He left about 6:15 and went to his house. When he got there, supper had grown cold and Mrs. Mills chided him for being late. After supper Mrs. Mills was sitting in the rocking chair on the stoop. Mills began to work on some brackets he was making for Mrs. Hall. About twenty minutes of seven Mrs. Mills came up the stairs, got some clippings from the Evening World, relating to Percy Stickney Grant and divorce, went down the stoop, and took the clippings to the church, where she left them on Hall's study desk. She came back to her house and on her return was told by Mrs. Opie that Mr. Hall had called her up in the afternoon. Mrs. Mills returned to her house, told Charlotte that she was going upstairs for a nickel to telephone. (* See footnote) She came down again immediately and told Charlotte to await her return. Charlotte did not do so, but saw her mother going in the direction of Abeel Street, toward Blitz's store. Mrs. Mills returned again to the house, got her scarf and hat, and, as she was about to leave, Mills asked her where she was going. She said, "Follow me and find out." He thinks that she told him that she had had a telephone call. "I didn't go out to see which way she went. I didn't follow her. That was around half past seven. I don't know whether she went up or down the street." Mrs. Mills was seen by the motorman on the trolley car going out to the end of Easton Avenue. He knew her because she had been on the car before. Hall was also seen on another car shortly thereafter. Mrs. Harkens and Mrs. Blust saw Mrs. Mills walking beyond the end of the trolley line on Easton Avenue in the direction of DeRussey's Lane. She appeared preoccupied and, according to Mrs. Blust, had a small package in a brown wrapper in her arm. Mrs. Blust says the package was about the size of the envelope containing the notes produced at the preliminary hearing, and that Mrs. Mills held the package in her arm close to her body. A few minutes later Mrs. Harkens and Mrs. Blust saw Hall coming in the same direction as Mrs. Mills. He also seem preoccupied.

(* Louise Geist, the maid in the Hall home, overheard this telephone conversation as to what Hall said - "Yes - Yes - Yes - That's too bad. I was going down to the church in a little while. Can't we make arrangements for later - about a quarter after eight?")

The women noticed that the clock on the vocational school was about eight o'clock when Hall passed.

According to his story, Mills continued to work on the porch on the brackets until it was dark. He then went inside his house (the second floor of 49 Carmine Street, reached by an outside stairway) and worked on the brackets until about 9:45. He then read the New Brunswick Home News and the Evening World for fifteen or twenty minutes. He says he noticed that some clippings had been cut out of the Evening World. He says that Charlotte and Dan, who had gone out about the time their mother left, returned about ten o'clock and went to bed. (Charlotte's story varies - at one time she says her father was home when she and Dan came in, and at another time she says that he came in shortly after they returned.) Mills says that he then went down the outside stairs and talked with Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, who live on the ground floor of the same house, 49 Carmine Street. That, while talking to them, a Mrs. Dank came along and talked to Mrs. Kelly about an automobile accident in which Lawrence Hill (Larry Witt) was injured. (We have never got a satisfactory statement from the Kellys or Mrs. Dank. They have refused to talk.) He then walked down the street, smoked a cigar, went to Blitz's store for a soda, and about eleven o'clock went to the church, locked it up and put out the lights. His statement is not clear whether he went to the Blitz store before or after going to the church about eleven o'clock. Also he indicates that he went there for the purpose of finding out to whom Mrs. Mills had telephoned when she went out at 7:30 and seems to have had some talk with Charlotte along this line. While in church, shortly after eleven o'clock, he did not look to see if Mrs. Mills was there. He came home about 11:25 and went to bed, leaving the door unlocked and the light burning. Mrs. Mills and Charlotte occupied one bedroom, Mills and Dan another. About a little before 2:00 A.M., Mills woke up, was startled by the light being on, went into Charlotte's room, asked her if her mother was there, saw that she was not there, put on his clothes and went down to the church, arriving there about five minutes after two. He turned on the lights and went through all the seats to see if his wife had fallen in a faint. Not finding her, he put out the lights (he remembers looking at the clock and seeing that it was 2:25 A.M.), and then returned home. He went to bed but did not sleep.

Friday morning, between eight and nine, he went to the church as usual to open the windows. While there, he saw Mrs. Hall. He states that he had the following conversation with her:

Mrs. Hall - "Did you have any sickness at your house last night?"
 Mr. Mills - "Why, no, Mrs. Hall."
 Mrs. Hall - "Mr. Hall has not been home all night."
 Mr. Mills - "My wife hasn't been home all night. Do you think it was an elopement?"
 Mrs. Hall - "Oh, no, Mr. Hall would not do that. I think it is foul play."

Mr. Mills - "Did you hear whether there was any automobile accident? Did you telephone the police or hospitals?"

Mrs. Hall then said she had called up the night sergeant of the police station, but didn't give her name. Mills then asked Mrs. Hall about Hall's bank accounts. About noon Mrs. Hall came to the Mills house and asked Mills if he had heard anything, and he told her that he had not. Again a little after five Mrs. Hall came to the Mills house and he said that they had heard nothing. Mills said, "If I hear anything, I will come up to the house." That evening, Friday, after supper, Mills got the church ready for choir practice and then went to Mrs. Hall's house. She was alone on the porch.

Mr. Mills - "Well, Mrs. Hall, I don't know what way to think, or what to do."

Mrs. Hall - "I am just looking at a blank wall."

Mr. Mills - "Mrs. Hall do you think they went to the Coney Island carnival?"

Mrs. Hall - "Oh, no, Mr. Hall would not go there. They are dead or they would come home."

Mills then returned to the church and stayed until after choir practice was over. He says that he then searched Hall's desk in the study of the church to see if he could find any letters or notes. He found none. He then put out the lights, had a soda with Dan, and got home about twenty minutes of ten.

On Saturday Mills went to the Hall house in the morning. Mrs. Hall was not home when he first arrived, but she came back in a few moments. He said, "I won't be satisfied until she gets back. My home is in an awful condition. The children are upset. And what did she (Mrs. Hall) do? She said 'It is certainly too bad.' " After dinner Mills went to the house of his wife's sister, Mrs. Augusta Tenneson, and said, "Have you heard anything of Eleanor? She has been gone two nights. Has she been here?" Mrs. Tenneson said, "No, I haven't seen Eleanor for a week." (This was the first inquiry Mills made of anyone in the family concerning Mrs. Mills' absence. Compare that to Mrs. Hall's activity. Mills testified at the hearing that the only place his wife had ever been over night before without notifying him was at her sister's in Paterson, Mrs. Barnhart, but he did not communicate with Mrs. Barnhart or anyone else until Saturday morning.) After leaving Mrs. Tenneson, and while he was walking down the street, a little girl came up to him and said that Mrs. Tenneson wanted to see him again. When he got back to the Tenneson house, she told him that the bodies had been found in DeRussey's Lane. (See bottom of Page 8, Mills' statement to Parker for Mills' indefiniteness as to his knowledge of Easton Avenue, De Russey's Lane, Buccleuch Park.) He started down

Albany Street, intending to go out to the scene. At Albany and Spring Streets he looked at a bulletin board and came home, feeling sick. Shortly afterward he went to see Mrs. Hall and told her they had found the bodies. At Mrs. Hall's he took some aromatic spirits of ammonia to keep from fainting. Mrs. Hall told him that Mr. Florance had just telephoned the same news and "she sat as calm as life. I flopped down in the chair and they gave me aromatic spirits of ammonia. Believe me, if I wasn't sick." Mills came home. Addison Clark (Mrs. Minna Clark's husband) came and said that Totten wanted to see Mills at Hubbard's Morgue. Mills went there and was taken in a car by Totten, to whom he gave a statement of his movements. Mills came to the Hall house again on Sunday evening, but Mrs. Hall did not see him. He stayed only a short time.

Subsequently the prosecutor took several statements from Mills, also his finger-prints. DeMartini talked with him many times, Ellis Parker several times. (stenographer's transcript of the statement of January 24, 1923) Mrs. Julia Harpman Pegler of the Illustrated Daily News practically lived at the Mills house for several months and Milton O'Connell, a Herald reporter, became an intimate of Charlotte. From the day the bodies were discovered Mills talked freely with reporters. Usually he would say his own thoughts what the person previously speaking to him had put in his head. After the grand jury investigation in November, 1922, resulted in no action, Mills became the center of activity on the part of the prosecutors, the newspapers and myself. Mills' statements contained many inconsistencies. In February, 1923, the Daily News, of which Philip Payne was then the editor, arranged for the testing of Mills at a seance in a clairvoyant's parlors in New York. Mrs. Pegler had learned that Mills believed in spiritualism. Mrs. Pegler and Ellis Parker then arranged to have Mills written to on specially prepared stationery of "Madame Astra". Mills told Mrs. Pegler about the letter he had received. She advised his going to New York and actually went with him. An apartment on West 82nd Street had been fixed up in Oriental fashion. Mills was ushered in by a "Hindu" and told to take a seat and keep his hands on a crystal ball. Madame Astra then appeared, took her seat on a dais and began to communicate with the spirit of Mrs. Mills. Concealed behind the dais were Ellis Parker, Beekman, Totten, Philip Payne and two stenographers. Mills, in spite of evident prodding by the medium, never asked the question who killed his wife. Mrs. Pegler returned to New Brunswick with him and stayed at the Mills house that night. The following morning, Sunday, she accompanied Mills by trolley car from New Brunswick to Mount Holly to see Parker. She stated that the first thing Mills said to Parker was that the medium had told him he was innocent. Mrs. Pegler states that nothing even remotely approaching this was said at the seance.

The references to Mills in Mrs. Mills' handwriting found between the bodies are as follows:

"Wasn't I happy to find a sweet note, for I didn't expect you would risk leaving one for me yesterday. "

"The note I left yesterday was crumpled, but I had to hide it in my small orange purse, as I met him. "

" - but I must stop, as there are peepers around. "

"Charlotte talks, then Dan asks questions, then he annoys, so how can I write."

"When I said I would leave a note, I forgot that it might not be wise, but I may take a chance, for I can't have you disappointed even tho it isn't much."

"I guess I'd better not leave this but give it to you tomorrow."

"It is 3:30 and he hasn't returned. I may wait until he comes back, and then I can be sure you will get this."

In some of his statements Mills says that he went to the church on Saturday night and found Hall's desk in the study there ransacked. This was after the statement had been made in the newspapers that Mrs. Clark and Mr. Edwin Carpenter had gone to the church Saturday afternoon and taken out various drawers containing papers. In the Parker statement Mills says that on Friday night, after choir practice, he, himself, went through Hall's desk in the study to see if there were any letters there of or to his wife.

Mills has continued for the most part to maintain his belief that Hall was a man who would do him no harm. He seems never to have been indignant about the relations of his wife and Hall.

In public statements Mills maintained that he knew nothing of the relationship of Hall and Mrs. Mills before the murders. Charlotte, however, has stated to Ellis Parker, Mrs. Pegler, O'Connell, DeMartini and others that her father knew all about the fact that Mrs. Mills was infatuated with Hall and that

her mother and father had frequently quarreled about the relationship. Mrs. Opie also heard frequent quarrels between

them. Mr. and Mrs. Barnhart told DeMartini that both Mills and Mrs. Mills had spoken to them about Hall and quarrels.

Mills denies he read the notes on Wednesday night which he found in his wife's coat. His references to elopement and Coney Island, together with his statement that the notes were undated, without salutation and unsigned, indicate that he must have looked at them.

Mills also says that while his wife was in the hospital in January - February, 1922, somebody took some letters from Mr. Hall to Mrs. Mills out of the Mills house. This was probably done either by Charlotte or Mrs. Barnhart, at the request of Mrs. Mills, who feared that Mills would read them. Mills must at least have known of the existence of such letters in order to know that they had been removed.

T.N.P.